

September 17, 2008 - Chairwoman Slaughter Applauds Extension of Expiring Great Lakes Protections

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chairwoman Slaughter Applauds Congressional Action to Extend Expiring Great Lakes Protections, Calls for Even More Action

Legislation Will Help Clean Up Toxic Pollution Plaguing Great Lakes

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chair of the House Committee on Rules and Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Task Force, today applauded the passage of the Great Lakes Legacy Reauthorization Act (H.R. 6460), critical legislation that provides funding to clean up toxic pollution in the Great Lakes.

Unfortunately, high concentrations of toxic substances remain in some rivers and harbors that feed into the Great Lakes. In 2002, Congress enacted the Great Lakes Legacy Act to provide funding to clean up this contamination. Congressional authorization for the Great Lakes Legacy Act, however, is set to expire on September 30, 2008.

"The Great Lakes are a national treasure," said Rep. Slaughter. "They are important to New York and our nation as both an environmental and economic asset. The Great Lakes Legacy Act has been heralded as an extremely effective federal environmental clean up program and there is an urgent need for Congress to reauthorize it."

Today Chairwoman Slaughter joined colleagues in the House of Representatives in passing the Great Lakes Legacy Reauthorization Act to ensure that we will be able to continue cleaning up contaminated sediment and monitoring the health of the lakes. The legislation will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

As Chairwoman Slaughter celebrated the passage of this important legislation and major victory in the effort to preserve the Great Lakes, she called for even more action.

"We must do everything we can to ensure that the Great Lakes are managed properly so they continue to benefit our communities for generations to come," Slaughter continued. "I strongly believe that immediate approval of the Great Lakes Compact is desperately needed to protect this important resource."

Chairwoman Slaughter is a strong supporter of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a multi-state agreement to manage water resources of the Great Lakes Basin. Eight states that border the Great Lakes - including New York - are party to the Compact. The legislature of each state has already ratified the Compact; however, before the agreement can become federal law, it must be approved by Congress.

Last week Chairwoman Slaughter sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling on her to bring this critical legislation to the House floor for a vote.

BACKGROUND

Great Lakes Legacy Reauthorization Act (H.R. 6460)

This bill will reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act and increase federal funding for it from \$50 million per year to \$150 million year to allow the Environmental Protection Agency to carry out monitoring, prevention, and clean up of contaminated sediment in the rivers and harbors feeding into the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes Compact

The Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact bans new and increased diversions of water outside the Great Lakes Basin with only limited, highly regulated exceptions.

The Compact calls on the signatory states to develop and implement water conservation programs that, collectively, will ensure improvement of the waters and water dependent natural resources; will protect the integrity of the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem; and, specifically, will retain and restore the quantity of surface water and groundwater in the Basin.

In addition, the Compact requires the Great Lakes states, in cooperation with the Canadian provinces, to conduct a periodic assessment every five years of the cumulative impacts of withdrawals, diversions, and consumptive uses of Great Lakes waters.

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